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Commission on the Status of Women
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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality

Statement submitted by World Vision International, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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* E/CN.6/2004/1.

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World Vision International (WVI) endorses both the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) & the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) which are crucial international commitments that stipulate the importance of equality between women & men, girls & boys in all spheres of life – protection, participation, development & survival. It is commendable that, for the first time in its history, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in its 48th session will have one of its thematic issues dealing with the role of men & boys in achieving gender equality.

Gender equality is paramount if boys & girls, men & women are to live in a society where there is equal access & opportunity in employment, social services (education, health, water & food), ownership of property, participation in policy making, governance & the law. WVI's experience in 96 countries confirms that in order to attain gender equality we must address involvement in decision making processes, representation in leadership & empowerment. WVI is gravely concerned with and advocates for policy change that will end discrimination against women & girls, including violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, oppression & unjust subordination. Men & boys must play important roles in the solution rather than being stigmatized as the problem.

The UN expert group on the role of boys and men in achieving gender equality (2003) organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) in cooperation with the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) addressed several issues, and two that need urgent follow up are on the HIV/AIDS pandemic & sharing of domestic responsibilities.

Furthermore, World Vision makes the following recommendations to the governments, NGOs and UN agencies involved in the 48th session of the CSW:

- Develop leadership qualities in boys & girls with an emphasis on ethnic, social & civil conflict resolution & empower them to influence peace building, management & other positive social behaviour

- Ensure the participation of boys & girls in national, regional & international movements that address child labour with particular emphasis on equal wages, education for all & combating early marriage

- Reiterate the importance of education with specific urgency on the goal & target of the Dakar Framework of Action for Education for All (2000) & the Millennium Development Goals which state: *Eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education no later than 2015*. More specifically this would entail the:

  - Inclusion of the gender equality elements into the curricula in primary education and in training of teachers.

  - Enhance the learning conditions for children in rural areas.

  - Collect gender disaggregated data, including boys and girls with special needs and minorities.

- Training for the teachers at primary schools in regards to inclusion of boys and girls with special needs in their classes.

- Involve both men & women, girls & boys in combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic specifically in the areas of prevention, care & treatment

- Strengthen the partnership between men & women in their shared responsibilities at home, at work, in the community & nation

- Promote gender equality through the development & implementation of gender sensitive legislation & ensuring that information technology & media portrays women & men, boys & girls without gender stereotypes

- Ensure the participation of men and boys in eliminating harmful traditional practices such as early marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM)